

Fwd: Foster Care Issues  
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**From:** "Rose, James M" <[JaRose@dallasisd.org](mailto:JaRose@dallasisd.org)>

**Date:** March 28, 2017 at 11:52:44 AM CDT

**To:** "[Info@GregAbbott.com](mailto:Info@GregAbbott.com)" <[Info@GregAbbott.com](mailto:Info@GregAbbott.com)>

**Cc:** "[Janis\\_Jack@](mailto:Janis_Jack@)

**Subject:** Foster Care Issues

<!--[if lte mso 15 || CheckWebRef]-->

Rose, James M has shared a OneDrive file with you. To view it, click the link below.

■ Foster Care Ideas.docx

3/28/2017

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As a foster parent, it is time we speak up. The Federal Court is wrong about blaming Group Homes and changing rules in CPS that will not fix the issues. They are all just window dressing.

I have attached my views in a word document. I know this may never get read and probably will just be discarded. But I do believe that a system must be developed so that the quality of care can be improved, and a rating system would make this possible. It is discussed at the end of the document and makes sense.

James Rose  
Foster Parent  
Cell 469-939-5816

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3/28/2017

## Foster Care Ideas

In order to understand the complexity and enormous problems that are within the current foster care system, there is no better experience than being a foster parent. Foster Parents deal with each problem on a daily basis and I hope that this provides some insight into each issue that exists and hopefully some practical solutions.

### **What is a Foster Parent?**

A foster parent is someone willing to help a child and a family in crisis. They are the beginning point for healing. Healing takes place in many forms whether that be psychological, physical or spiritual. A foster parent may have a child for a short period of time which allows the biological family to get the help that is needed so they can be reunited, or a foster parent may be asked to take care of that child much longer up to and including adoption. In either case, the foster parent's primary focus is the child. Many of the children that come into the foster care system have been betrayed by their families and lack trust of adults. This issue of trust at the heart of every other issue and can and does manifest itself in many odd and peculiar behaviors. The foster parent must be able to use their best judgement to reach the child.

The child, in many cases, wants to prove to the authorities that removed them that this foster family is not any better than their own family. This means that the child will in all likelihood do things to try and make the foster family look bad. The foster parent must prepare themselves for this behavior. It is hard to get the child to understand that the foster parent is a caring adult that just wants to help them. This goes back to the trust issues that they have. The child may invent stories that they tell Caseworkers, Guardian Ad litem, and Court Appointed Special Advocates thinking that if they can show them that the foster home is bad in hopes that they can go back home where it was better because their life was fine before they were removed. This leads to foster parents having investigations by CPS investigators.

The foster parent also must deal with a constant barrage of people that must meet with the child monthly. In addition, Foster Parents do notes daily documenting each child's behavior, provide transportation to visits, provide transportation to medical, dental, therapist, and psychiatrist visits. Foster Parents provide clothing and all the basic necessities required as most children come into the foster care system with nothing but the clothes on their back. In addition, the foster parent must also work with the school system and their demands. The expense comes out of the foster parents pocket for most of it with the exception of those items specifically covered by Medicaid.

The foster parent also deals with Caseworkers who are very young and must rely on their "training" because they have never been a parent. They have never dealt with the issues that these children bring and they do not stay long enough to understand the issues. The Caseworker is another person that wants to help children but at the end of the day, it is their job and the individual child is another case on their caseload. The Caseworker is rewarded by a low salary and high turnover so the child and the foster parents really cannot rely that they will be there for the long haul. The fact is that those workers who do remain long term better understand the children and better work with the foster parents but this is the exception not the rule.

When something does go wrong, Foster Parents are at the bottom of the pyramid and this is where the blame usually goes. The Foster Parent is the first person thrown under the bus. The example goes like this. A teenager is removed from their biological family due to neglect. The teenager has anger issues. Teenagers already are hard to place because many foster parents want the small child in hopes of adoption. The teenager comes home from school in a bad mood because they did not perform well on a test. The foster parent notices and asks the child what is wrong. The child does not answer and goes into their bedroom and punches a hole in the wall and breaks his hand. Foster Parents take the child to the ER for the broken hand and completes all the reports required by CPS and their foster care Agency. The Foster Parent now has an investigation and a hole in the wall that must be immediately repaired because Licensing has minimum standards and requires that it be repaired. Licensing Investigators have the same issue as caseworkers in term of turnover and with training being a huge issue, may decide to blame the foster parent and cite them for lack of supervision even though there was no lack of supervision. It was just a case of a child having a fit of Anger.

In Texas, Foster Parents have been thrown under the bus time and again. There are 2 classifications of Foster Homes. The Family Foster Home which may have up to 6 children in their home. The Family Group Home which used to have as many as 12. The Foster Parents are the same in both. The children placed are the same in both. The main difference is that the parents in a group home opened their hearts to take more of these kids in need instead of allowing them to sleep on a floor in a CPS office, they gave these kids a bed, and a family and love. The reward for opening their lives to all these children? A Federal Judge declaring that the system is broken and the blame for all of the problems is the Group Home and it is better that these children sleep in a CPS office than in a warm bed in a loving home.

### **The Fix**

When it comes to recruitment of foster parents, this is not new but it is the main way that people become involved is through contact with current foster parents. This is done in many different ways whether that be through activities in the community and church. Retention is the main issue. Foster Care Agencies, and Child Protective Services can provide all the recruitment efforts and get a lot of new families but the average time a family provides care as a foster parent is less than 5 years. So why the turnover and how to fix it?

It is really simple.

1. Reimbursement Rates are as low as \$20/day which is baseline poverty to take care of a child. This means that in order to take care of the child, a foster family uses their own funds to take care of a child that is not their child. Most Foster Families would tell you that they want to help but do not want to go broke in the process. God Forbid that you even ask for extra assistance or ask about the reimbursement because they try to label the foster parent as doing this for money. This is the farthest from the truth. Fix it – Provide a Minimum and Maximum Rate based on each child and length of care possibly tied to a rating system (will explain below)
2. Respect. Foster Parents are treated like vermin. They are treated by CPS as 2<sup>nd</sup> Class. When they talk to the parents concerning the child, the CPS caseworker substitutes their judgement for that of the parent. When the caseworker only sees the child once a month and the parent is with that child on a daily basis. Fix it – Have the CPS Caseworker be responsible for the Respite Provider for families with kids on their caseload and be required to provide respite at least once

every 6 months. This will provide them with a new respect to the foster families that become involved.

3. Respite Care. Parents burn out when they do not get breaks. While they love the children and want to help, they do need to get away occasionally. Some Agencies offer Respite Care but most leave it up to the foster parent to find their own. And then if they do find someone, the respite provider has to go through a lot of hassle and expense to become a respite provider. Fix it- See Number 2.

The issues with raising public awareness is that when we hear about foster care, it is always in the news and always bad. People run from things that are bad. We have to change the perception and this is the hard part. We need for all those involved in foster care to share the hope that foster parents provide and what can be accomplished when communities come together. We must promote this through churches and other civic and charitable organizations. Having Foster Parents speak to these groups about the good that foster parents do and how it makes them feel.

Family Support Activities should include helping provide family activities to foster and adoptive parents. Whether that be providing something as simple as a family picnic at the park or a day at the movies. Having been a foster parent for over 10 years and having served over 300 children and their families, I can assure you that family outings breed family unity and trust between the child and the foster parent. Provide access to these activities and encourage them.

The Last thing, which was mentioned before and I feel is needed across foster care is a rating system. That rates foster homes and higher reimbursement should be provided for higher quality care and not a minimum rate that is below the poverty level. This could be as simple as a checklist that is completed by CPS, CASA, Guardian Ad Litem, Therapist, and Foster Care Agency Personnel every time they enter a home. These checklists are submitted and a score generated. Each Foster Home would need to maintain a score of 80 or above in order to receive placement. Any home with a score of less than 80 would be given the opportunity to receive help and training to improve but no placements would be made until the score was at least an 80. Homes that do more for the kids would rank higher and could receive bonuses based on their score. This should be the same for either a Foster Family Home or a Foster Group Home. This checklist would include not only the physical home but also those things that the foster home does for their children. In this way, care would improve in each home. Homes that consistently score below 70 would be closed insuring that homes would provide high quality care. Foster Group Homes are needed and in Texas they need to be used so children do not end up sleeping in an office.